



**For Immediate Release**

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**Contact:**

Nik Sibley, [nsibley@rabengroup.com](mailto:nsibley@rabengroup.com), (850) 345-7092

**Moving Toward Decarceration: New Report from Square One Project Provides Roadmap for Ending Mass Incarceration**

*Community investments can achieve lasting, sustainable decarceration for returning citizens and bring an end to mass incarceration*

**New York, NY**— America’s jails and prisons are facing two crises - the COVID-19 pandemic and staffing shortages - that endanger the health and safety of individuals incarcerated and the staff who work there. Decarceration, the dramatic reduction of individuals within prisons and jails, is urgently needed to prevent future health crises in our carceral institutions and surrounding communities.

The newest paper from the Square One Project at Columbia University examines the science behind sustaining decarceration and offers a roadmap to achieving lasting gains in the fight to end mass incarceration. Instead of doubling down on incarceration, which has been the status quo for decades, the authors argue that ending the cycle of mass incarceration demands investments in healthcare, education, employment and social services, and greater research overall into the science of decarceration.

[Towards A New Framework for Achieving Decarceration: A Review of the Research Literature on Social Investments](#) offers a comprehensive study of which community-based investments can effectively reduce interactions with the justice system. Authors Emily Wang, Laura Hawks, Evie Lopoo, and Lisa Puglisi share evidence-based answers on sustaining decarceration and

detail why building and supporting safe and thriving communities are prerequisites for permanent decarceration.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has opened the nation's eyes to the deadliness that rampant overcrowding in our nation's prisons, jails, and other facilities can cause," said **Dr. Emily Wang, author of the paper and Director of Yale's Health Justice Lab**. "Activists rightly have made continuous demands for decarceration to prevent future outbreaks. Even after the pandemic, though, the urgent need for ending our obsession with incarcerating remains. The key to ending mass incarceration is following the science."

"To sustain decarceration and bring an end to mass incarceration, we must invest in our communities," said **Evie Lopoo, co-author of the paper and Project Manager for the Square One Project**. "Rather than doubling down on the failed practice of mass incarceration, investments in healthcare, education, employment, and housing are the way forward to end large-scale imprisonment."

Some of the most effective approaches for reducing the number of people incarcerated include:

1. Invest in early childhood education programs, particularly those that train and support parents.
2. Community-based job placement specialists can help individuals re-entering society find stable, gainful employment, which is extremely effective at preventing recidivism.
3. Social services care coordination and multisystemic therapy - an intensive family and community-based intervention for young people - are critical in the movement to decarcerate.

This report is released through Square One's Executive Session on the Future of Justice Policy, which seeks to generate and cultivate new ideas around the work to reimagine justice. Read the full report [HERE](#).

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### **About the Square One Project**

*The Square One Project at the Columbia Justice Lab aims to reimagine justice and create a pathway for reckoning in our country. Square One incubates new thinking on responses to racism, poverty and violence; promotes equitable safety and community thriving; and advances*

*narrative and cultural change. Learn more about the Square One Project at [squareonejustice.org](http://squareonejustice.org).*